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DISINTEGRATION

Nick Land - July 15, 2019 -

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According to a certain construction of cultural history, to which the natural sciences have often seemed attached, religion is essentially conceived as pre-scientific naturalistic explanation. Seen this way, religions are comparatively primitive cosmologies. This is what makes them vulnerable to scientific progress. A Galileo, or a Darwin, advances into their core territory, mortally wounding them in the heart. A somewhat sociologically-indistinct notion of "science" is envisaged as religion's natural successor.

However plausible (or implausible) this narrative is found to be, it matters. By way of it, scientific ascendancy acquires its foundational myth. Crucially, this mythical power does not depend upon any kind of rigorous scientific validation. No one has ever been under compulsion to put it to the test. Everything pre-modern — and even profoundly archaic — in the modernist enterprise runs through it. It provides a tacit infrastructure of deep belief.

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To refer to "mythic science" is not positively skeptical, still less polemical. For scientific ideas to acquire the status of myth is a matter of cultural potency, supplementary to whatever epistemic validity they retain. Scientific concepts do not become any less scientific by also becoming mythic. They can, however, on occasions sustain mythic power disproportionate to their strictly scientific legitimacy. The dominating apex of a culture is some more-or-less scientific cosmology.

This is what the word "nature" has primordially conveyed. An ultimate object of cognitive affirmation is promoted through it. *This is what we believe*. Things are this way, and not another way (or only another way elsewhere).

We ask here, then, as innocent scientific pagans: *Which way are things?*

The best current cosmology is accelerationist, and disintegrationist. To put the matter crudely — and ultimately untenably — the expansion of the universe is speeding up, and apart. Rather than being decelerated by gravity, subsequent to an original explosion, the rate of cosmic inflation has increased. Some yet-unknown force is overwhelming gravity, and red-shifting all distant objects. Quite recently baptized "dark energy," this force is thought to account for seventy percent of physical reality.

Compared to this strongly confirmed discovery of accelerating fragmentation, the notion of an underlying integral "universe" looks increasingly like an unsustainable mythological relic. "Unsustainable," that is, even in terms of consistent scientific myth, and also more practically.

The distance from which information can be received, or to which it can be broadcast, over any period of time has a boundary set by the speed of light. The space-time horizon of reality for any entity is determined by this "light-cone." Beyond it, there is only the absolutely incommunicable. A light-cone is thus, among other things, a strict delimitation of power projection, understood as practical unity. The process leads from general relativity to absolute disintegration.

In his intellectual history of relativistic physics,[1] Peter Gallison connects the problem of relativity to that of imperial management. Synchronization is the precondition for any sophisticated process of coordination. Even under (compact) terrestrial conditions, the extreme finitude of the speed of light posed a significant technical problem for governance at global-imperial scale. Telegraphic networks, in particular, demanded technical correction for relativistic effects.

By irresistible extrapolation, we can see that domination is only ever able to mask processes of escape. There can be no Cosmic Imperium. Space does not tolerate it. This is merely a science fictionesque fact, until it is mythologized.

Dark energy is tearing the cosmos apart. Eventually its pieces will mutually depart from each others' light-cones. They will then be nothing to each other ever again. This is a finding of extraordinary consequence. At the greatest scale of empirical objectivity, unity has no future. The "universe" is an unrealistic model. Everything now known about the cosmos suggests that fragmentation is basic.

Cosmology thus provides a model of disintegration that is remarkable for its extremity. It characterizes pieces that have nothing at all except a shared past in common, propelled into absolute non-communication. No political conception of separation has ever yet reached this limit.

Some fascinating results quickly fall out of the extrapolation. The cosmological evidence our scientific tradition has been able to draw upon will eventually cease to be available. A future intelligent species could not build any comparable model of the

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universe upon empirical foundations. Whatever counted as the whole, for it, would in fact be only a fragment (we can already see). Distant galactic clusters would have become matters for sheer speculation. The very possibility of empirical science would have been demonstrably bounded in space and time.

Geoff Manaugh calls it "the coming amnesia." He remarks on a talk by science fiction writer Alastair Reynolds:

> *As the universe expands over hundreds of billions of years, Reynolds explained, there will be a point, in the very far future, at which all galaxies will be so far apart that they will no longer be visible from one another. [...] Upon reaching that moment, it will no longer be possible to understand the universe's history—or perhaps even that it had one—as all evidence of a broader cosmos outside of one's own galaxy will have forever disappeared. Cosmology itself will be impossible. [...] In such a radically expanded future universe, Reynolds continued, some of the most basic insights offered by today's astronomy will be unavailable. After all, he points out, 'you can't measure the redshift of galaxies if you can't see galaxies. And if you can't see galaxies, how do you even know that the universe is expanding? How would you ever determine that the universe had had an origin?'*

Reynolds was drawing upon an article entitled "The End of Cosmology?" by Lawrence M. Krauss and Robert J. Scherrer, published in Scientific American (2008). This article summarized itself in the sub-head: "An accelerating universe wipes out traces of its own origins."

The extrapolation can be pushed further. If a far-future scientific culture can be seen to be structurally-deprived of evidence essential for realistic appraisal of cosmic scale, can we be confident our situation is fundamentally different? Is it not more probable that the absolute or unsurpassable locality of scientific perspective is a basic situation? How likely is it that we can see universally — in principle — when we can already see how others will in the future be unable to? On the basis of available evidence, we have to envisage a future civilization that is utterly deluded about its own structural parochialism, confident in its ability to finally shrug off perspectival limitation. The most esteemed scientific minds in such a culture might be expected to dismiss any suggestion of inaccessible cosmic regions as groundless metaphysics. It seems merely hubristic to refrain from turning this scenario back upon ourselves. If universal cosmology is to become impossible, the default hypothesis should be that it already has.[2]

Natural science exhibits a tragic structure. Pursuing only its own essential methods, it finds — through cosmology — a compelling case for its large-scale unreliability. The acquisition of universal insight through rigorous empirical investigation appears cosmically obstructed.

Science is thus eventually bound to be fundamentally localized. The "locality" at issue here is not merely the weak particularism of an option taken against the global, or universal. Rather, it is the very horizon of any possible universalistic ambition that finds itself rigorously constricted, and dismantled. Localism, thus understood, is not a choice, but a destiny, and even a fatality already imposed. At its greatest scales, reality is shattered. Unity exists only to be broken.

The principle of isotropy holds that there are no privileged orientations in space. Together with the presumption of the homogeneity of space, it composes the Cosmological Principle. We are surely entitled to an isochronic analog, in which a fate observable in the order of time can be assumed equally to already be behind us.

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observable in the order of time can be doubted equally to already be behind us.

We have a cosmos still, and perennially, then, but no longer a universe. The cosmos we, as moderns, subscribe to under cultural obligation is in fact the manifest disintegration of the apparent universe.

Our topic gears down from inflationary cosmology through thermodynamics. We are talking of diversification, or *heterogenesis*, after all – and that is the rigorous negative of entropy increase. Homogenization is entropy. The two concepts are not strictly distinguishable. What was discovered under the name of entropy was the destruction of difference — whether variation in temperature (Clausius and Carnot) or, later, variation in particle distribution (Boltzmann and Gibbs). Heterogenesis is local, the second law of thermodynamics tells us. At the truly global level – where no inputs or outputs can occur – deterioration necessarily prevails.

To get ahead of ourselves, we will find that the West has made of entropy a God, One whose final law is that everything shall be the same. It is a false god. The ultimate cosmo-physical problem – *How is negative entropy possible?* – attests to that. We know that heterogenesis is no weaker than its opposite, even if we do not know how.

Cosmological disintegration is more widely echoed among the natural sciences. Perhaps most importantly, *The Origin of Species* has disintegration as its basic topic, as its name already underscores. Darwinism — which is to say the whole of scientific biology — has speciation as its primary object, and speciation is splitting.

Despite recognition of various exotic lateral connections, from symbioses to retroviral genomic insertions, it is the divergence of genetic lineages that best defines life at the largest scales. Meldings are anomalous, and in any case impossible unless diversity has first been produced. The ingredients of any heterogeneous coalition presume prior diversification.[3]

Disintegrationism in the biological sciences amounts to a science in itself, named cladistics.[4] Cladistics formalizes the method of rigorous Darwinian classification. The identity of any biological type is determined by the particular series of schismatic events it has passed through. To be human is to be a primate, a mammal, a reptile, a bony fish, and a vertebrate, among other, more basic, classes. The sum of what you have broken from defines what you are.

A "clade" is a shard. It is a group, of any scale, determined by secession from a lineage. The point of differentiation between clades corresponds to their most recent (i.e. last) common ancestor. Crucially, therefore, all descendants of a clade belong to that clade, which encompasses any number of sub-clades. The production of subclades (origin of species) is called "radiation." It tends to proceed through serial bifurcation, since simultaneous complex cladistic fragmentation events are comparatively exotic. Successive simple branchings typically capture diversification. The stakes of it not doing so are not huge.

Cladistics can be identified with a rigorization of taxonomic nomenclature. A system of names writes a cladogram, which is to say a model of evolutionary history, and of

particular order of splitting. Any such proposed order is empirically revisable.

Cladistics maps the whole of disintegrationism below the cosmological level, and perhaps even up to it. Naturally, it is supremely controversial. The full scope of its provocation has yet to be understood. Insofar as cladistics is explanatory, however, much follows. Notably, identity is conceived as essentially schismatic, and being is apprehended fundamentally as a structure of inheritance.

Historical linguistics fell naturally into a cladistic mode. Linguistic 'families' shared

Historical linguistics left naturally like a cladistic model. Linguistic families shared essential characteristics with their biological template. They proliferated by sub-division, providing the material for a classification schema. It was upon this linguistic taxonomy that racial groupings were first systematically determined. The "Yamnaya" — still today more widely known as "Aryans" — were originally identified through the cladistics of Indo-European languages. Their pattern of radiation was marked by a tree-like linguistic diversification.

Differential anthropology was drawn in cladograms. Trees, phylogenetic order, language families, genealogies, actual (massively extended) families — it was all extremely coherent. Here, too, phenomena of fusion, lateral cross-contamination, and convergence — while by no means absent — were evidently secondary and derivative.

Linguistic diversification looks like a process of schismatic ethnogenesis. As peoples branch out, they mutually differentiate. The origin of peoples is only origin of species at higher resolution — the abstract pattern is the same.

The concrete mechanism of speciation typically involves the isolation of populations, and in this way becomes — very recently — political. There is a politics of "invasive species" and anthropic bio-dispersal, but this is not especially rancorous, or significantly polarizing. The case of human population isolation is very different. During this process of politicization, the exogamic radicalism of North-West European populations has been sublimed into a universal ideology.

Since the subject of race tends to produce extreme ideological and emotional disturbance today, it might be preferable to consider variegated domestic animals, as the English naturalistic tradition was inclined to do. Not only sound analogy but also balance, or true moderation is to be found in doing so. Since, in our contemporary cultural context the influence of country life has notably receded, and with it the sense of vivid distinction among cultivated species, dogs serve us as by far the most illustrative examples.

A world without mongrels would be a poorer world. Mongrels are often advantaged by special and even superior qualities. The Golden Doodle, for instance, is as exalted as any canine type that exists. Such crosses add to the diversity of the world. This is fully consistent with a basic process through which the world is enriched by diverging dog breeds, in which "dogs in general" is an increasingly uninformative category. There is not – yet – any ideology directed to global canine genetic homogenization.

Diversity is good, which is to say *robust*, and *innovative* (at least). The ecological consensus can be trusted in this regard. Invasive species are detested because they lower diversity, not because they raise it. Heterogenesis is at all times the superior ambition. Yet diversification — the production of diversity — is a peculiarly neglected topic in our contemporary social sciences. The mantra of diversity is coupled with almost complete indifference, and even strategic negligence, in this regard. Obligatory public celebration of diversity accompanies, and covers, its programmatic practical extirpation. Mankind, it has been authoritatively decided, is one, and destined only to be ever more so. Genetic partition is today considered tantamount to a human-rights violation.[5]

Our supreme orthodoxy is that it would be terrible almost beyond contemplation not to already be and become yet more One. We might be tempted to call this faith monohumanism. That mankind shall be a unity is its fundamental doctrine. It cannot be sufficiently emphasized that this is far less an empirical observation than a moral and political project, in which racial entropy has been elevated to a sacred obligation. The radical — as opposed to merely conservative — alternative to this vision is found only in science fiction.[6]

Preservation of human diversity is a staple of dissident ethnopolitics, with "Beige World" increasingly perceived as a coercive ideal. A typically inchoate resistance to

World" increasingly perceived as a coercive ideal. A typically inchoate resistance to racial entropy is the central mobilizing factor in such cases, though one regrettably afflicted by an immoderate fetishization of mandatory racial purity. At worst – and not uncommonly – this reaction against monohumanism has come to see all contributions to human genetic diversity through racial crossing as an avatar of coercive homogenization. The balanced response, to repeat the lesson of the dogs, is that a world of tendential speciation or increasing genetic diversity is by no compelling necessity a world hostile to mutts.

Over the last 60,000 years, human genetic divergence has been overwhelmingly the dominant process. Conspicuous fragmentation of modern humans into genetically distinct sub-species has been the basic pattern. It is a process worthy of ecological celebration, and even techno-industrial acceleration. Despite the fondest hopes of the present secular church, there is no chance it will be terminally dispelled.

"Globalism" is a word that, while ideologically contested, is of uncontested ideological weight. It might be defined, with minimal tendentiousness, as seeking the direction of policy from a perspective in accordance with the whole. Stubbornly partial orientations are its enemies. Yet such has been its triumph that — even in the face of recent set-backs — hostility is peculiarly drowned in condescension.

"Parochialism" is among the slurs globalism finds prepared to its convenience. It might accept an inability to see universally as understandable, and educable. A refusal of universalistic perspective, however, can merit no such sympathy. It is, for the globalist, essentially unethical. Parochialism is less to be argued against than simply scorned. It is to be despised in the name of the universal — which is becoming amusing.

Whatever we have seen as the death of God is only a special case of universality's more comprehensive demise. While God's death was mostly inferred, the death of the universal unfolds as an explicit scientific spectacle. Astrophysics sees the universe being dismantled before its artificial eyes.

The globalist camp is especially prone to gesticulations of piety in respect to the idea of science. It is ironic therefore that — in scientific terms — globalism looks increasingly like an untenable religion. Its intrinsic cosmology is an archaic myth. It could not easily be more obvious that there is no universe, outside this mythological structure. The fundamental nature of the cosmos is to go its separate ways.[7]

Pieces are basic. To conceive them following from wholes is confusion, produced by unsustainable universalistic frames. Any perspective that can actually be realized has already been localized by serial breakages. Nothing begins with the whole, unless as illusion. Today, we know this both empirically and transcendentally. Anything not done in pieces is not done in profound accordance with reality.

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[1] *Einstein's Clocks, Poincaré's Maps: Empires of Time*, New York, 2003.

[2] Manaugh quotes Krauss and Scherrer saying: "We may be living in the only epoch in the history of the universe when scientists can achieve an accurate understanding of the true nature of the universe." The intellectual indolence of this suggestion is remarkable.

[3] Isolation of genetic lineages is a matter of sound — if spontaneous and unconscious — experimental technique. *Avoid cross-contamination of test samples.* Which is to say *do it*, if you insist, but don't expect optimal epistemic outcomes if you do. Optimal epistemic outcomes tend to win.

[4] The arborescent orientation of cladistics could not be more unflinching. The word 'clade' is taken from

the Greek clados, meaning branch. A cladogram is an abstract tree. Its articulations are all branchings. Deleuze & Guattari's critical engagement with it has been highly influential. They tell us they are "bored of trees." The alternative to arborescence, they propose, is the rhizome — a network in which every node connects to every other. Appropriately, the 'rhizome' is not itself a taxonomic concept, but a morphological one. The balanced position is to acknowledge that evolutionary trees are complemented by ecological webs. Neither is conceivable without the other. The evolutionary tree is pruned and trained within ecologies of lateral relations. Phylogeny is overwhelmingly tree-like, while ontogeny involves far more lateral influence. We will limit ourselves here, with cryptic brevity, to remarking that Deleuzoguattarian rhizomatics is rhizomatically connected to Neo-Darwinism, but it is cladistically Neo-Lamarckian.

[5] This is a simplification, wormed-through by incoherences and unprincipled exceptions. Most notably, ad hoc special permissions are granted to 'minor' populations. The notably erratic usage of the word 'genocide' is the most obvious index of this. A closer construction of the operating formula might be: *Population partitioning is wrong, absolutely and universally, insofar as it secures the isolation of North-West European populations.*

[6] Bruce Sterling, Alastair Reynolds, and Neal Stephenson among very many others populate their fictional worlds with radically diversified neo-hominid types.

[7] Robin Hanson devotes a recent blog post to three (comparatively exotic) varieties of tree like descent. The first is an odd thought experiment that need not distract us even momentarily here. The second concerns his mind-clone "ems." This is of potential relevance to a range of potential, and even already actual software lineages. The third is the structure of the quantum multiverse. It suggests that a tree-like cosmology arises on paths quite different from that pursued here. He notes: " ... a quantum history is in part a tree of observers. Each observer in this tree can look backward and see a chain of branches back to the root, with each branch holding a version of themselves. More versions of themselves live in other branches of this tree."

Tree-like multiverses are especially numerous. Lee Smolin proposes a Darwinian multiverse, selecting for reproductive fitness through the production of black holes. It might be described as a cladistically-structured multiverse, were this label not so much more widely applicable. Cladistic multiverses belong to the much larger set of cladistically-structured entities, whose parts are characterized by:

1. A single line of descent
2. Genetically non-communicating siblings, and
3. Some multitude of potential descendants

Such multiverses predict their own imperceptibility. Since parallel branches are mutually non-communicating, it is to be expected that their existence is strictly theoretical. If the multiverse was a rhizome we'd see more of it.

Simulation Argument ontology also tends to disintegrationism. Simulations are essentially experiments, and thus various.

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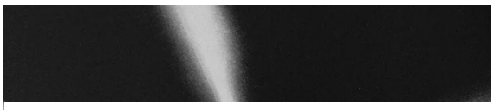

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